

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1        1. A method of crediting an account of a network access
- 2        node, comprising:
  - 3            receiving a data signal at the network access node;
  - 4            forwarding the data signal wirelessly to a network user
  - 5            node; and
  - 6            providing account crediting information to an
  - 7            accounting system, wherein the account crediting information
  - 8            represents a credit to be recorded for an account associated with the
  - 9            network access node.
- 1        2. The method of claim 1, wherein the network access
- 2        node is a repeater.
- 1        3. The method of claim 2, wherein the network access
- 2        node is further part of an ad hoc network.
- 1        4. The method of claim 1, wherein the network access
- 2        node is an access point.
- 1        5. The method of claim 4, wherein the data signal is
- 2        received from a public telephone.
- 1        6. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing
- 2        account debiting information to the accounting system, wherein the
- 3        account debiting information represents a debit to be recorded for an
- 4        account associated with the network user node.

1        7. The method of claim 1, further comprising providing  
2 second account crediting information to the accounting system,  
3 wherein the second account crediting information represents a  
4 second credit to be recorded to an account associated with the  
5 Internet service provider and the data signal is provided by an  
6 Internet service provider.

1        8. The method of claim 1, wherein the network user node  
2 is a portable, handheld device having a display.

1        9. The method of claim 1, wherein the credit is based on  
2 the forwarded data signal.

1        10. The method of claim 9, wherein the credit is based on  
2 at least one of the time of day and airtime usage of the data signal.

1        11. The method of claim 9, wherein the credit is calculated  
2 on at least one of a per-packet basis and a flat rate basis.

1        12. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of forwarding  
2 includes transmitting the data signal using a wireless local area  
3 network (WLAN) protocol.

1        13. The method of claim 12, wherein the WLAN protocol is  
2 the IEEE 802.11 protocol.

1       14. A portable device configured as a repeater, comprising:  
2               means for receiving a data signal wirelessly;  
3               means for forwarding the data signal wirelessly to a  
4       network user node; and  
5               means for providing account crediting information to an  
6       accounting system, wherein the account crediting information  
7       represents a credit to be recorded for an account associated with the  
8       portable device.

1       15. The portable device of claim 14, wherein the portable  
2       device is configured to operate in an ad hoc network.

1       16. The portable device of claim 14, further comprising  
2       means for providing account debiting information to the accounting  
3       system, wherein the account debiting information represents a debit  
4       to be recorded for an account associated with the network user  
5       node.

1       17. The portable device of claim 14, further comprising  
2       means for providing second account crediting information to the  
3       accounting system, wherein the data signal is provided by an  
4       Internet service provider, wherein the second account crediting  
5       information represents a second credit to be recorded to an account  
6       associated with an Internet service provider.

1       18. The portable device of claim 14, wherein the credit is  
2       based on the forwarded data signal.

1       19. The portable device of claim 18, wherein the credit is  
2       based on airtime usage of the data signal.

1        20. The portable device of claim 18, wherein the credit is  
2        calculated on a per-packet basis of the data signal.

1        21. The portable device of claim 14, wherein the means for  
2        forwarding includes a wireless local area network (WLAN)  
3        transmitter.

1        22. The portable device of claim 21, wherein the network  
2        user node is a portable device.

1       23. An accounting method for crediting an account  
2 associated with a network access node, comprising:

3               receiving a communication event message, wherein the  
4 communication event message includes identification data  
5 representing a network access node, wherein the communication  
6 event message is received in response to the network access node  
7 receiving and forwarding a data signal on behalf of a network user  
8 node; and

9               crediting an account associated with the network  
10 access node based on the communication event message.

1       24. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the  
2 communication event message further includes the number of  
3 packets in the forwarded data signal.

1       25. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the  
2 communication event message further includes the duration of a  
3 communication between the network access node and the network  
4 user node.

1       26. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the  
2 communication event message is received in response to the  
3 network access node repeating the data signal in an ad hoc network.

1       27. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the  
2 communication event message is received in response to the  
3 network access node acting as an access point.

1       28. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the  
2 communication event message includes second identification data

3 representing the network user node, further comprising debiting an  
4 account associated with the network user node.

1        29. The accounting method of claim 23, further comprising  
2 crediting an account associated with an Internet service provider,  
3 wherein the data signal is provided by the Internet service provider,  
4 wherein the communication event message includes third  
5 identification data representing the Internet service provider.

1        30. The accounting method of claim 23, wherein the  
2 network access node receives and forwards the data signal via a  
3 wireless local area network (WLAN) protocol.

1       31. A method of crediting an account associated with an  
2 access point, comprising:  
3            receiving a data signal at the access point;  
4            forwarding the data signal wirelessly to a network user  
5 node using a wireless local area network (WLAN) communication  
6 standard; and  
7            providing account crediting information to an  
8 accounting system, wherein the account crediting information  
9 represents a credit to be recorded for an account associated with the  
10 access point.

1       32. The method of claim 31, wherein the data signal is  
2 received from a public telephone.

1       33. The method of claim 31, wherein the data signal is  
2 received from the Internet.

1       34. The method of claim 31, further comprising providing  
2 account debiting information to the accounting system, wherein the  
3 account debiting information represents a debit to be recorded for an  
4 account associated with the network user node.

1       35. The method of claim 31, further comprising providing  
2 second account crediting information to the accounting system,  
3 wherein the data signal is provided by a data source, wherein the  
4 second account crediting information represents a second credit to  
5 be recorded to an account associated with the data source.

1       36. The method of claim 31, wherein the network user  
2 node is a portable, handheld device having a display.

1           37. The method of claim 31, wherein the credit is based on  
2 the forwarded data signal.

1           38. The method of claim 31, wherein the credit is based on  
2 airtime usage of the data signal.

1           39. The method of claim 31, wherein the credit is  
2 calculated on a per-packet basis.

1           40. The method of claim 31, wherein the wireless local area  
2 network protocol is the IEEE 802.11 protocol.

1       41. An access point, comprising:  
2               a receive circuit configured to receive a data signal;  
3               a transmit circuit configured to transmit the data signal  
4       over a wireless local area network (WLAN) to a network user node;  
5       and  
6               an accounting circuit configured to provide account  
7       crediting information, wherein the account crediting information  
8       represents a credit to be recorded for an account associated with the  
9       access point.

1       42. The access point of claim 41, wherein the receive  
2       circuit is coupled to a public switched telephone network.

1       43. The access point of claim 42, wherein the data signal is  
2       received from an Internet service provider.

1       44. The access point of claim 43, wherein the account  
2       crediting information represents a credit to be recorded for an  
3       account associated with the Internet service provider.

1       45. The access point of claim 41, wherein the wireless local  
2       area network operates according to the IEEE 802.11 standard.

1       46. The access point of claim 41, wherein the credit is  
2       based on the transmitted data signal.

1       47. The access point of claim 41, wherein the credit is  
2       based on airtime usage of the data signal.

1       48. The access point of claim 41, wherein the credit is  
2       calculated on a per-packet basis.

1           49. The access point of claim 41, wherein the accounting  
2 circuit is further configured to provide account debiting information,  
3 wherein the account debiting information represents a debit to be  
4 recorded for an account associated with the network user node.

1       50. A system for crediting an account associated with a  
2 network access node, comprising:  
3               a network access node configured to provide a  
4 communication link with a network;  
5               a network user node configured to provide a wireless  
6 communication link with the network access node; and  
7               an accounting system configured to credit an account  
8 associated with the network access node based on a communication  
9 between the network user node and the network.

1       51. The system of claim 50, wherein the network access  
2 node is a repeater configured to provide a wireless communication  
3 link with an access point coupled to the network.

1       52. The system of claim 50, wherein the network access  
2 node is an access point coupled to a network, wherein the network  
3 includes a public switched telephone network.

1       53. The system of claim 50, wherein the accounting system  
2 is further configured to debit an account associated with the remote  
3 node based on the communication between the network user node  
4 and the network.

1       54. The system of claim 50, wherein the network user node  
2 is a portable handheld device having a display.

1       55. A wireless communication module for a public  
2       telephone coupled to a public switched telephone network,  
3       comprising a wireless local area network (WLAN) transceiver circuit  
4       configured to provide a wireless communication link between the  
5       public switched telephone network and a network user node.

1       56. The wireless communication module of claim 55,  
2       further comprising a tamper-resistant casing surrounding the  
3       transceiver circuit.

1       57. The wireless communication module of claim 55,  
2       further comprising a digital subscriber line (DSL) circuit configured to  
3       communicate between the public switched telephone network and  
4       the transceiver circuit.

1       58. The wireless communication module of claim 57,  
2       wherein the transceiver circuit is configured to communicate with  
3       the network user node pursuant to the IEEE 802.11 standard.

1       59. A method of adjusting at least one of an account of a  
2       first person associated with a network access node and an account  
3       of a second person associated with a network user node,  
4       comprising:

5                   receiving a data signal at the network access node;  
6                   forwarding the data signal wirelessly to the network  
7       user node; and  
8                   providing account adjustment information to an  
9       accounting system, wherein the account adjustment information  
10     represents at least one of a credit to be recorded to the first person's  
11     account and a debit to be recorded to the second person's account.

1       60. The method of claim 59, wherein the network access  
2       node is a repeater.

1       61. The method of claim 60, wherein the network access  
2       node is further part of an ad hoc network.

1       62. The method of claim 59, wherein the network access  
2       node is an access point.

1       63. The method of claim 59, wherein the account  
2       information represents a credit to be recorded to the first person's  
3       account.

1       64. The method of claim 59, wherein the account  
2       information represents a debit to be recorded to the second person's  
3       account.

1        65.. The method of claim 59, further comprising providing  
2 second account information to the accounting system, wherein the  
3 second account information represents a second credit to be  
4 recorded to an account associated with the Internet service provider  
5 and the data signal is provided by an Internet service provider.

1           66. The method of claim 59, wherein the network user  
2 node is a portable, handheld device having a display.

1           67. The method of claim 59, wherein the credit is based on  
2 the forwarded data signal.

1        68. The method of claim 59, wherein the step of forwarding  
2 includes transmitting the data signal using a wireless local area  
3 network (WLAN) protocol.

1           69. The method of claim 68, wherein the WLAN protocol is  
2           the IEEE 802.11 protocol